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Excerpted from Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).




**FIGURE 7.1** Six-year-old Dodie Bacon smiles at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*'s March 12, 1959 headline celebrating Hawai'i statehood. Shot by her father George Bacon, the iconic photograph—nodding to the popular conception of the islands as a "Pacific Melting Pot" and a "bridge to Asia"—circulated worldwide.

Courtesy of George Bacon Collection, Hawai'i State Archives.

## Misters Fong and Inouye Go to Washington, Taipei, and Tokyo

Americans had high hopes for their newest state. At last, here was the unmatched opportunity for the United States to offset "the bad effect of Little Rock in Japan."[60] With no less than the balance of international relations at risk, the nation followed the inaugural contests for Hawai'i's public offices with rapt attention.[61] Asian American aspirants made a strong showing at the polls, capturing forty-two of the eighty-one open positions, including one of the two US Senate seats (by Chinese American Hiram Fong) and Hawai'i's sole berth in the House of Representatives (by Japanese American Inouye). The press saluted the event as "a melting pot election in a melting pot land" while President Eisenhower praised the results as a "very fine example" of "democracy at work." To many, the outcome denoted a watershed in the history of Asian American—and indeed, American—race and citizenship with global implications. As the

*New York Times* trumpeted, "We can now say to people of the Far East, 'Your brothers and cousins have equal rights with ourselves and are helping to make our laws.' "[62]

Incontrovertibly, the Cold War argument for statehood had primarily been a rhetorical strategy aimed at domestic audiences throughout the debate's duration. Yet a number of Hawai'i's leaders and federal officials had sought to implement this concept into concrete diplomatic outreach in the 1950s. University of Hawai'i president Gregg Sinclair recommended that the VOA broadcast radio and film segments about "the work of American democracy" on the islands. Territorial senator Herbert K. H. Lee, a Chinese American, advised Secretary of State Dean Acheson to utilize Hawai'i's "Americans of Oriental stock" to represent the United States in the Far and Middle East. John Goodyear, the US Consul in Singapore, correspondingly urged the State Department to augment the circulation of Asian Hawaiian "Americana"—depictions of assimilated Asians living harmoniously within island society—throughout his region as a means to foster Southeast Asians' identification with the United States' culture and values.[63] The US Information Agency took up these suggestions, producing an assortment of propaganda pieces with such titles as "Hawaii: A Land of Opportunity" and "Hawaii, U.S.A."[64] The State Department also invited Dr. Richard K. C. Lee, the Chinese American president of Hawai'i's Board of Health, and Lawrence Nakatsuka, the Japanese American press secretary to the territorial governor, to lecture in several Asia-Pacific countries as part of its Leaders' and Specialists' Exchange program. US emissaries favorably assessed the expeditions, applauding both for conveying faith in the "democratic way of life" and displaying "forcible proof" of Asian American upward mobility.[65]

Fong and Inouye willingly inherited this agenda with their respective electoral victories. In October–November 1959, Fong personally financed a multicity fact-finding trip (to Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Manila, Singapore, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Saigon, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Bangkok, Korat, Rangoon, Hong Kong, and Okinawa) with the dual objectives of acquainting himself with the economic, political, social, and military conditions of the various locales along with promoting ties between his host countries and the United States. At each stop, the senator met with high-level dignitaries (Taiwan's first couple, President and Madame Chiang, South Korean president Syngman Rhee, and Philippines vice president Diosdado Macapagal); toured military installations, agricultural projects, and educator training facilities; conducted press conferences, recorded radio broadcasts and telecasts, and spoke before a range of audiences (such as the Korean National Assembly, the Singapore Rotary Club, and a Thailand Fulbright alumni group). During his appearances, Fong invoked the trope of Hawai'i as a racial paradise to underscore opportunities under

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US democracy for people of all backgrounds, pointing to his own experiences as evidence. Not least, he repeatedly encouraged Overseas Chinese communities and the Southeast Asian governments to study the example of Chinese in the United States as a guide for assimilating those populations as well as elevating them to full citizenship and equality. Foreign Service officials raved that the visit furthered US interest in the region, spelling out for locals the "meaning of Hawaii statehood and his own success." The embassy in Manila was pleasantly surprised that Fong's address to the Su Yuen Tang Chinese family association stirred several Cantonese Filipinos present to "prais[e] the United States as the bastion of liberty and racial equality."[66]

Like Fong, Inouye stepped into his preordained role as transpacific intermediary with ease. Within days of his election, he announced his wish to travel to Japan as a living example of the possibilities afforded by US democracy and a "bridge of understanding" between the two nations. Inouye spent three weeks in the Far East in December 1959, seeing Tokyo along with Naha (Okinawa), Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. As the centerpiece of his tour, the visit to Japan in particular generated much excitement. Inouye followed a packed itinerary in Tokyo, calling on Prime Minister Kishi, Foreign Minister Fujiyama, Crown Prince Akihito, and Princess Michiko; meeting with members of the Diet; and addressing the Foreign Correspondents Club, using these encounters to promote the economic and political partnership of Japan and the United States and press for the ratification of a mutual security pact. He and his wife, Margaret, also underscored their pride in their US citizenship and appreciation of their Japanese cultural heritage.[67]

State Department officials were delighted with the representative's performance, lauding it as a "major contribution to the strengthening of U.S.-Japan friendship." According to the Tokyo embassy's official report, one gauge of Inouye's impact was the record number of viewers who tuned in to his guest turn on the Japanese television series *Life Is a Drama*. The episode featured his family members, friends, Ambassador Douglass MacArthur II, and the man who saved Inouye's life during combat, all of which resulted in "great emotional impact." Overall, the Inouyes garnered more attention from the Japanese press than any other Americans who visited Japan that year. The representative affirmed this assessment. "The Asians were stunned and thrilled that I was elected," he told *Look* magazine. "My becoming a congressman personified for them our democratic way of life."[68]

Fong's and Inouye's international tours captured the tensions inherent in Asian American citizenship at midcentury. Certainly, the willingness of many Americans to admit Hawai'i to statehood signaled a radical departure from the alarm surrounding the Oriental Problem. But the

appearances abroad of the senator and congressman as official emissaries of the United States—the very apex of inclusion—drew on and further consolidated their otherness as not-white and ineradicably foreign. As a case in point, the *New York Times* proclaimed Fong, above all his colleagues, as the best fit for the role of ambassador to the Pacific Rim: "The color of his skin and the shape of his eyes tell his story to an Asian audience before he begins to speak. . . . The appearance in Asia of a United States Senator with Oriental features could hardly be matched in effectiveness." In the same vein, Inouye expected that other members of the House of Representatives would assume him to be knowledgeable about Japan.[69]

Neither Fong nor Inouye explicitly denied this assumption of natural affinity, perhaps because of genuine interest in the region, heartfelt commitments to fighting Communism and improving the future of US-Asia relations, or desires to shore up their own political capital. Certainly Fong did not shy away from claiming racial expertise. Before his trip, he contacted each of the consulates and embassies to inquire about the status and treatment of the Overseas Chinese in those regions. Despite his insistence that he be regarded as a representative of Hawai'i and the United States rather than as "the Senator from Taiwan," Fong actively spoke out on the Overseas Chinese issue at each point on his journey, sometimes to the chagrin of State Department officials, who feared that his interventions would inflame area ethnic tensions. And in his election bids in 1959 and 1964, Fong ran under the campaign slogan "Man of the Pacific." Inouye, too, played up the notion of Asian Americans' essential connection to Asia during his tour by stressing the "special place" of Nisei in advancing US-Japan relations, rekindling the vision that Japanese American leaders had espoused in earlier decades before World War II forced them to abandon the idea.[70]

Hawai'i statehood and the Fong and Inouye tours suggest that even the very height of Asian Americans' inclusion into the nation at midcentury did not necessarily translate into the absence of alienage. In these moments, the state and the public recognized Asians in the United States as uber-Americans while at the same time reinscribing their difference from whites and thus their distance from full citizenship.

## Fong, Inouye, and the Invention of the Model Minority

Along with diplomatic duties, Americans envisaged a second task for the fledgling state and its congressmen. In acclaiming Hawai'i as a melting pot and racial paradise, observers saw its utility as an exemplar for domestic relations—tempering the bad effect of Little Rock in Little Rock, as it




**FIGURE 7.2** Campaign poster for Senator Hiram Fong.
Courtesy of the collection of the estate of Hiram Leong Fong.

were. The accent on Hawai'i's promise for improving America's racial woes was not entirely new. Liberals, of course, had long noted Hawai'i's "unorthodox race doctrine." As *Life* contended in 1948, "The Islands' contribution to the United States will be an example of warm tolerance and understanding almost unknown in the 48 states now considering Hawaii's bid to join them." Still, Cold War imperatives took precedence over ameliorating the plight of African Americans in arguments favoring statehood before 1959.[71]

Once admission became a certainty, proponents' focus shifted more squarely to Hawai'i's role in advancing a solution to the Negro Problem, given its symbolically closer relationship to the mainland, the prospect of real voting power in Congress, and the press of the civil rights movement. In the final round of hearings conducted by the House in January 1959, Massachusetts representative John W. McCormack emphasized that Hawai'i's unparalleled record in interracial "cooperation" would have a "salutary effect" on similar efforts throughout the mainland. Expectations ran high. The *Chicago Defender* decreed that Hawai'i's citizens must be cognizant of their "mission" to thwart the congressional southern bloc and "bring down the walls of American race prejudice."[72]

While contemporaries generally assumed that as nonwhites, Hawai'i's people would sympathize with black struggles for equality, they nonetheless intimated that islanders would approach race relations in a culturally distinct manner. The ubiquitous James Michener, speaking yet again on behalf of the statehood movement, pointed to the fiftieth state's potential to treat the "grave internal problems" plaguing the South. Hawai'i's congressional emissaries held the possibility of "contribut[ing] to the relaxation of such tensions" through "conciliatory means" and "quiet precept," rather than "shout[ing] and bellow[ing]." Hawai'i's senators and representatives of Chinese and Japanese ancestry, in other words, would set the standard of political conduct to be emulated by both black civil rights activists and the mobs of white massive resistance. Michener's musings previewed the increasing identification of Asian Americans with such cultural traits as moderation and restraint in the coming decade.[73]

As in the realm of international relations, Fong and Inouye shouldered the weight of this anticipation, finding themselves catapulted into the national spotlight. The intersection of their historic responsibilities, the novelty of their racial difference, and their spell-binding personal trajectories riveted the public. This extensive notice positioned them as the most visible Asian American figures of the day—a distinction reified by the duo's immortalization in Washington, DC's Wax Museum of History alongside such notables as Abraham Lincoln and Babe Ruth.[74] In effect, Fong and Inouye became not only the representative faces of Hawai'i but also stand-ins for Asian America in its entirety. Their rise to prominence greatly advanced the crystallization of the model minority concept in the 1960s.

Fong personified the rags-to-riches American meritocracy ideal, prompting the media to label him a "Hawaiian Horatio Alger." Various profiles applauded the determination of this son of immigrant sugarcane laborers to "lift himself out of poverty" from a young age by peddling newspapers, shining shoes, and delivering poi. By his own account, Fong worked his way through his undergraduate studies at the University of Hawai'i, saving just enough to attend Harvard Law School, and then returned home with "10 cents in my pocket" to found his own firm. He diversified his pursuits by running for a seat in the territorial legislature, twice succeeding in 1938 and 1941. With the outbreak of World War II, Fong interrupted his budding political career to serve in the US Army Air Force. After his stint in the military, he returned to government, serving as Hawai'i's speaker and vice speaker of the House. Incredibly, Fong also found time to preside over multiple business ventures in real estate, finance, and bananas, among others.[75] On the eve of his swearing in, *Pageant* magazine eulogized that this "American success story" was "clear proof that racism has no permanent place in America." Fong concurred, "I hope that the American people will see my life as symbolic of the opportunity offered only in a democratic society such as ours." This uplifting narrative decidedly upheld some of midcentury liberalism's most cherished orthodoxies, especially the integration and assimilation of racial minorities.[76]

Fong's relationship to this ideology, however, was not uncomplicated. On the one hand, Fong's odyssey resonated with the liberal impulse to create a multiracial nation. On the other hand, his racial views aligned more closely to conservatives. He expressed a belief in racial equality, but also hesitated to support civil rights law, stating, "We shouldn't rush into a flood of legislation to reform a mode of living that has been going on for years in the South." The African American press in particular conveyed disappointment in the senator's stance. "Don't believe those false reports about the tremendous liberality rampant in Hawaii," responded

a *Los Angeles Sentinel* columnist. "Maybe after some Dixiecrat calls him a 'coolie' he'll change his mind fast!" During the 1968 Republican National Convention, the *Sentinel* described Fong as a "Political Jekyll and Hyde" given the disconnection between his racial background and voting record: "Hiram Fong is by no means a 'colored' thinker or senator. Come to think of it what Chinese is?" From this vantage point, Fong was definitively not-black, as was the totality of Chinese America by extrapolation.[77]

Biographies of Inouye embraced a contrasting emphasis: his stature as the consummate Nisei soldier. As a member of the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team, he rose to the rank of captain and earned numerous decorations (the Purple Heart, a Distinguished Service Cross, and a Bronze Star). While in action, Inouye lost his right arm—a sacrifice unfailingly mentioned by reporters. ("Asked if he would fight to defend America, he holds up his empty sleeve, says, 'The country can have the other one, too.' ") The injury extinguished his aspirations to a medical career, and Inouye turned instead to law and government. After attending the University of Hawai'i and George Washington University Law School on the GI Bill, the veteran practiced as an attorney and deputy prosecutor in Honolulu, then secured a seat in the Territorial House as part of the 1954 Democratic Revolution. Inouye won reelection in 1956 before moving to the Territorial Senate in 1958 and then on to Washington, DC, the following year.[78]

The representative's popularity and renown surged quickly. In Hawai'i's first House race, Inouye received 68 percent of the votes cast. He handily reclaimed his position in 1960 with an even more impressive 74 percent landslide. The US Junior Chamber of Commerce ranked him among the ten outstanding young men of 1959, while *Life* magazine named him one of the hundred most influential young members of the "Take-Over Generation" poised to assume leadership in US society, culture, and politics. In 1962, Inouye defeated Benjamin Franklin Dillingham II, scion of one of the islands' most elite haole families, in what *Newsweek* dubbed an "eye-catching race" for Hawai'i's open Senate seat.[79]

As with Fong, Inouye's prodigious climb spoke to what many saw as the growing urgency to defend the tenets of liberal democracy. His life was further evidence that race no longer handicapped individual progress. Inouye's memoir *Journey to Washington*—first published in 1967 and excerpted in *Reader's Digest* in February 1968—spoke directly to this message. In the introduction, Inouye stressed the similarities between the experiences of Americans with roots in the Asia and those whose families originated in Europe. Both groups faced the same challenges of "assimilation": survival, cultural adaptation, upward mobility, and "full acceptance by their fellow-countrymen." Throughout his autobiography,




**FIGURE 7.3** Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson administers the Oath of Office to Senator Daniel Inouye in a reenactment of his January 1963 swearing-in ceremony.
Courtesy of the Associated Press.

Inouye repeatedly insisted on this overlap as he retraced his steps from Honolulu's slums to Capitol Hill. The point was that the United States was a nation of immigrants as well as a place that allowed each one "to aspire to the topmost limits of his own talent and energy," regardless of ancestry or background.[80]

*Journey to Washington*'s significance lay in its dual cultural-political intervention at a moment when postwar racial liberalism was coming under heavy fire for its failure to solve the American Dilemma. At its core, the book upheld the vision of race management touted by liberal leaders since World War II: tolerance, civil rights, equality of opportunity, integration, and assimilation. In the first of three forewords, President Johnson praised Inouye's "relentless struggle to achieve freedom of

opportunity and equality for Americans of Japanese ancestry, and for all racial and religious minorities." Vice president Hubert H. Humphrey, author of the second prologue, noted that despite their differences in upbringing, he and Inouye "both had the great gift of discovering that there is no limit to the aspirations of an American boy." In the third preface, Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield celebrated the United States' ability to right the past wrongs of Asiatic Exclusion by merging its "Oriental strain" into the "main body of America's humanity," epitomized by Inouye's attainments. The trio of introductions framed Inouye's life history as an allegory of racial progress under US liberal democracy, supplying indisputable attestation of both nonwhite, individual advancement and the corporate achievement of a multiracial nation. More obliquely, *Journey to Washington* also validated the notion of state engineering to address racial inequality—the feature of racial liberalism facing perhaps the most vigorous assault from the Right by the late 1960s. Various moments throughout the text symbolized and vindicated the federal government's actions to facilitate Asiatic integration, especially the formation of the 442nd and Hawai'i statehood.[81]

The book's other main interposition was its portrayal of Inouye as a prototypical model minority figure. While much of the text highlighted the senator's achievements as result of his individual efforts, Inouye acknowledged the importance of the GI Bill and his military pension in providing him access to college, law school, and ultimately the middle class and political elite. By presenting these forms of government assistance as both nonraced and earned by the heroes of the 442nd, however, the memoir forestalled criticisms of Japanese Americans as a coddled minority group profiting from the Great Society's largesse and the War on Poverty's expansion of the welfare state. Inouye's narrative, in other words, placed Japanese Americans in the category of deserving citizens as opposed to that of the undeserving (i.e., black) poor. Moreover, in sculpting the narrative arc as a "Journey *to* Washington," Inouye's story presented Nisei's attainment of full citizenship as participation in mainstream electoral politics. This representation clarified the incipient notion of Asian Americans as not-black by implicitly invoking the foils of African American activism in the civil rights and black power movements.[82]

This is not to say that Inouye deliberately intended to position Asian Americans as model minorities against African Americans. To be clear, he himself was troubled by the increasingly prevalent inclination to counterpose the two groups in the context of the late 1960s' racial politics. Delivering the keynote address at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Inouye recounted, "As an American whose ancestors come from Japan, I have become accustomed to a question most recently asked by a very prominent businessman who was concerned about the threat of

riots and of the resultant loss in life and property. 'Tell me,' he said, 'why can't the Negro be more like you?'" "You" in this statement functioned as a rhetorical shorthand, referring both to Inouye as an individual and a representative of all Asians in the United States. Furthermore, without the need for elaboration, "you" conjured up and braced the embryonic stereotype of "Orientals" as politically moderate, patriotic, industrious, and eager to assimilate. Soberly, Inouye challenged this juxtaposition by dismissing the comparison as unsound. "Although my skin is colored it is not black," he declared. Unlike African Americans, Asians in the United States had never endured chattel slavery or been subjected to "systematic racist deprivation" comparable to the extent of Jim Crow. The solution to the American Dilemma therefore could not be achieved by simply having blacks "be like" Asians. In rejecting the suggestion that Asians serve as paragons of conduct for African Americans, Inouye clearly delineated a boundary between the two. Because Asian Americans were definitively not-black, he stressed, they could *not* serve as models for African American assimilation.[83]

Inouye's Democratic National Convention appearance, though, accomplished the opposite effect. Observers interpreted both the message and messenger as confirmation of Asian Americans' model minority status. Journalists noted that the senator disciplined all those who engaged in protest politics, whether in support of civil rights or black power, or against the Vietnam War, in calling on the nation to shun "violence" and "anarchy" in favor of "law and order." When the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* declared, "You don't tell a man such as this that he knows nothing about poverty, discrimination, war, or changing human needs and conditions," it echoed the social commentators and government officials who claimed that Asian Americans had achieved socioeconomic success through hard work and quiet assimilation, notwithstanding a history of intense racial hardship. Grasping the political utility of this comparison, Johnson urged Democratic presidential nominee Humphrey to select Inouye as his running mate: "He answers Vietnam with that empty sleeve. He answers your problems with Nixon with that empty sleeve. He has that brown face. He answers everything in civil rights, and he draws a contrast without ever opening his mouth." Summarily, even as he decried this association, Inouye embodied the new racial wisdom marking Asian Americans as the "good" people of color.[84]

Inouye closed his remarks at the Democratic National Convention by bidding convention delegates "aloha"—a fitting gesture to the spatial corollary of Asian American racialization. After admission, Hawai'i endured in the national imagination as a modern racial paradise, justifying not only the United States' continuing political domination but also its capitalist encroachment. The persistence of this fantasy hinged

in part on regenerating the trope of the vanishing native in relation to Asian American "success." Poststatehood accounts of Hawaiian society remarked on the "rapidly" disappearing indigenous population. As Hawai'i's "sophisticated civilization" displaced "old Polynesia," so, too, were "full-blooded" Native Hawaiians destined to fade into the mixed-race population with only vestiges of their traditional culture to remain. Contemporaries juxtaposed the fate of Native Hawaiians to the rise of the "AJA"s (Americans of Japanese Ancestry). They relegated Native Hawaiians to the primitive past, whereas they hailed Japanese Americans as the symbols of the islands' future. While such ruminations were generally celebratory, competing voices could occasionally be discerned. One example was that of Reverend Abraham Akaka, who conveyed the ambivalence toward statehood expressed by many of his fellow Native Hawaiians. On the day after Congress passed the Hawai'i statehood bill, Akaka sermonized, "There are some of us to whom statehood brings great hopes, and there are those to whom statehood brings silent fears. . . . There are fears that Hawaii as a state will be motivated by economic greed, that statehood will turn Hawaii . . . into a great big spiritual junkyard filled with smashed dreams, worn out illusions; that it will make the Hawaiian people lonely, confused, insecure, empty, anxious, restless, disillusioned—a wistful people." Later he mused that "the Hawaiian . . . must chart his own steps, make his own studies, and make up his own mind" to prevent the total erasure of Native Hawaiian "identity."[85]

Such protestations nonetheless remained overshadowed by the dominant discourse of Hawai'i as a racial paradise. Notably, the first report of the US Commission on Civil Rights in 1959 rehearsed the conviction that Hawai'i boasted a culture of tolerance and integration, rooted in "mutual respect, understanding, and widespread appreciation of the dignity and goodness of human beings."[86] By the late 1960s, urban crises breathed new life into this timeworn construct, reshaping the idea of Hawai'i into a definitively not-black melting pot. "In the time of civil rights struggles across the nation on the mainland, Hawaii stands aloof. Only a few exclusive clubs still discriminate against orientals, and few obstacles remain to advancement of a member of any racial group," observed the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Syndicated newspaper columnist Drew Pearson drew unambiguous contrasts between the islands' Asian Americans and African Americans in northern cities. "What's happened in Hawaii is a healthy reversal of what's happening on the mainland. In Detroit, Newark, and other big cities, it's the young Negro who is the disillusioned troublemaker. In Hawaii, it's the young generation which is building up a loyal citizenry, setting an example of racial understanding."[87] Depictions of Honolulu as an anti-Detroit and anti-Newark replicated and regenerated characterizations of Asian American propriety in contradistinction to

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African American lawlessness. More broadly, the mutual constitution of Asian and African American racialization in this geographic comparison corroborated the merging of distinctly regional racial systems (Hawai'i, West, North, and South) into a national order that would continue to depend on juxtapositioning the Asian American model minority and the African American underclass to reproduce white privilege in the post–civil rights era.[88]

The history of Hawai'i's relationship to the United States might be seen as a microcosm of the trajectory of Asian American race and citizenship from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. Once reviled as the islands' Oriental Problem, inhabitants of Asian ancestry resurfaced model minorities through the course of the statehood debate alongside parallel changes on the mainland. The willingness of so many Americans to admit the territory of Hawai'i as the fiftieth state in the Union was the material counterpart to this discursive shift.

Asian Americans and people of all backgrounds welcomed this change in status with hearty enthusiasm. And yet to reiterate, this seemingly inclusive gesture begat a new set of exclusions and marginalizations. It obscured the very existence of Native Hawaiians and problems that they faced as colonized subjects. It furthered assumptions about the perpetual foreignness of ethnic Asians. And it reinvigorated popular beliefs about the unruliness and criminality of African Americans. These consequences have served to buttress continuing inequalities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, whether in terms of refusals to recognize indigenous sovereignty claims or denials of human rights.[89]

Hawai'i statehood, finally, illuminates the ongoing narration of US national identity as characterized by exceptionalism in a double sense. The framing of admission as the only possibility for Hawai'i's future in the liberal political discourse of the 1940s and 1950s effectively obfuscated the similarities between the United States' imperial ventures and those of the European empires. In a different vein, but no less troubling, national conversations about statehood set African Americans apart as exceptions to the rule of immigrant assimilation and incorporation. While seemingly discrete, both projects together served to legitimate the spread of the United States' global hegemony by valorizing American democracy as exceptional, benevolent, and superior to alternative arrangements of power.[90]

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